

Specifications

- Lens: Plastic optical lens, f8 60mm
- Shutter: Leaf shutter
- Shutter Speed: 1/100 sec.
- F Stops: f11 (sunny), f8 (less sunny)
- Film Size: 120
- Frame: 6x4.5cm, 6x6cm
- Focusing: 3' to infinity

Recommended Films

For general shooting (in daylight), 400-speed b&w and color films work well. Chromogenic (C-41) b&w films (Ilford XP2 super and Kodak CN 400) work particularly well because of their wide exposure latitude.

In overcast conditions 400 b&w can be pushed a stop or two. Kodak PMZ 1000 and Fuji NHGII 800 also work well.

Ilford Delta 3200 can be rated from 800-24,000 and is useful for any number of less than sunny conditions from overcast days to brightly-lit rooms.

Slide films have a narrow margin of error, which makes them tricky to use with a Holga in available light conditions. Fuji RMS 100/1000 is a good choice because it works well at many speeds. If you are shooting one or more rolls in consistent lighting situation you can run a test snip or a test roll and then decide if or how much to push the rest of the film.

It is possible to use slower films like Ilford Pan F Plus 50 or Agfa Ultra 50 and build up enough exposure by making multiple exposures or by "push processing" the film.

With the right Holga on the right day, 100 speed transparency films work great in "magic light" conditions.

6x4.5 or 6x6?

Before you load the camera you have to decide which format to shoot. The Holga comes set up for 6x4.5 (15 exposures). If you choose to shoot 6x6 (12 exposures) and take advantage of the Holga's trademark vignetted and edge distortion; a few modifications are necessary.

Remove the 6x4.5 mask.

Move the arrow on the back from 16 to 12. The format switch on the back is stuck on 16 but you can move it with firm downward pressure from your thumb. If your thumb isn't strong enough, use a table knife or Flathead screw driver to un-stick it. Be careful not to poke a hole in the red safety window.

Loading the Camera

Ideally the Holga should be loaded and unloaded in subdued light.

- Slide the metal clips downward and remove the camera back.
- Insert the film into the left side of the camera and remove the film's seal.
- Pull the leader out about 4 inches, keeping your thumb on the spool to prevent it from popping out.
- Insert the tapered end of the leader into the slot of the take up spool.
- Give the winding knob a couple of turns. Keep your thumb on the left spool while winding so the film winds tightly onto the take up spool.
- * Acquire a small (1x2") piece of thin cardboard (film boxes or index cards work well) and fold it up a few times. Insert the cardboard to the left of the film spool to keep the film taut. Make sure the cardboard insert creates enough tension without making it too tight to wind comfortably.
- Replace the back and secure it with the metal clips.
- Wind the film to #1 and you are ready to shoot.

* Step 7 is optional but highly recommended to prevent loosely wound film; especially if you have removed the 6x4.5 mask.

Unloading the Camera

If you suspect that your Holga has rolled the film loosely on the spool try unloading it in the dark and transferring your roll to a light tight bag or container.

- Turn the film advance knob until the paper is completely wound onto the take up spool.
- Moistened the seal and wrap it tightly around the film.
- Move the remaining spool to the right side and you are ready to load your next roll.

Focusing

The icons on the Holga's lens barrel represent approximately the following distances:

- Head and Shoulders: about 3 feet
- 3 people holding hands: about 9 feet
- 9 people: about 18 feet
- Mountain: 30 feet to infinity.

Exposure

The general rule for negative films is to overexpose for safety. This especially applies when you are shooting with a plastic lens that is renowned for its low contrast and lack of shadow detail. With 100-400-speed film and no flash you are going to want to shoot in bright conditions outdoors with the sun to your back. In most other lighting situations you will have to use ultra high-speed film or a flash.

Light Leaks

It is a good idea to make a flap to cover the film counter window on the back, especially if you are shooting color film. Some Holga users prefer tape the whole thing up with black tape to try to avoid any light leaks including a couple of little holes that are revealed inside when the 6x4.5 mask is removed.

Photo and gaffers' tapes work the best. Electrical tape on a hot day makes a sticky mess

Lazier photographers who want to avoid taping and untaping their camera every time they want to change film will want to keep their Holga in a small camera bag until the moment that they are ready to take a picture, and accept any minor light leaks as serendipity.

I have seen Holgas that were taped incessantly but still mysteriously leaked light.

Using Flash and Studio Strobes

Any Flash with a hot shoe can be attached to the Holga. An adjustable automatic flash is ideal but anything that will work with an f/8 opening will do. To use studio strobes you can use hotshoe to PC adapter, a photo slave and a flash, or an infrared slave. The Holga always causes two flashes, one when you press the shutter and one when you release. This will munch your flash batteries but more importantly you should be careful not to freak out your power pack by consistently making double flashes. Hold the shutter down until the pack recharges then release.

Multiple Exposures

Whether by accident, or for effect, multiple exposures are a key feature of the Holga. You can take multiple images on one frame or overlap frames by partially winding to the next frame. It is also possible to build up exposure in a low light situation by making multiple exposures of the same image. Each stop of extra light requires twice as many exposures as the last, i.e. 2 exposures gives 1 extra stop of light 4 exposures gives 2 stops 8 exposures gives 3 stops, and so on.

Bulb Holga

The Holga's shutter speed can permanently be converted to bulb by removing the shutter spring with some needle nose pliers and affixing the shutter to the open position using a piece of tape or a little bit of Super Glue. The shutter arm that used to trigger the shutter now acts as a shutter by letting in light as long as the shutter release is depressed and blocking light out when it is released. Since the shutter arm isn't designed to keep light out it is a good idea to use the lens cap to prevent any fogging between exposures. An old Holga with a slow or broken shutter is perfect candidate for this project

Tripod Socket

The Holga does not come equipped with a tripod socket but one can be easily added by getting a quarter-twenty threaded nut from the hardware store and super gluing it to the bottom of your Holga. Lazier photographers can affix their Holga to a tripod using duct tape or gaffers' tape.

Keeping the Back On

One minor design flaw with the Holga is that the clips that hold the camera back shut are also where the strap is to be attached. This can be mildly disastrous, especially when used in conjunction with an on camera flash. When the feather light Holga is top heavy it tends to flip over, pulling the little clips that keep the back on.

This whole mess can be averted by taping the back on or securing it with rubber bands.

Good Bad Optics

Most people love the Holga for its sharp-vs.-soft look with vinetting to create a dreamy sort of effect. However, I have heard the complaint that compared to the Diana the Holga's optics are too good. The thing is, when you've spent only \$15 on a Holga, it's not a crime to abuse the lens a little (try using a needle or a little sandpaper around the edges) to soften it up a bit. Or better yet, remove the lens and shutter and add a piece of thin metal with a little hole in it, which turns the thing into a 120 pinhole.

The Cabbage Patch™ Effect

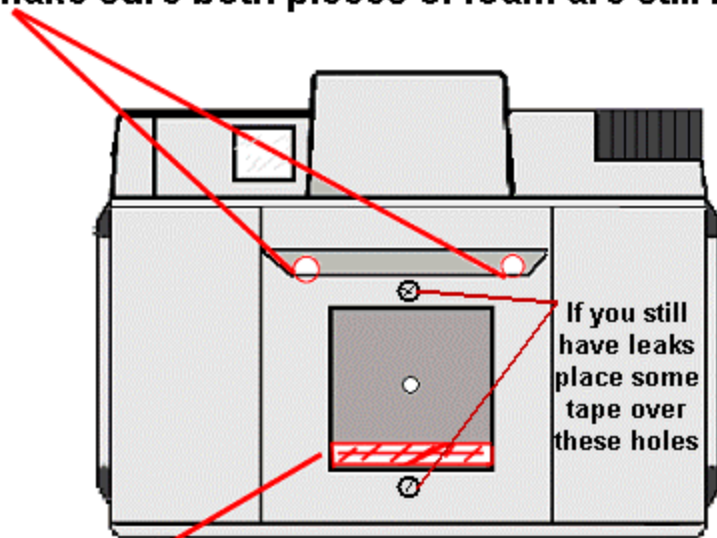
The lack of any kind of quality control at the Holga factory yields cameras that each have their own special qualities, their own personalities if you will. Some have slower shutter speeds, others have a unique lens distortion or light leak. Serious Holga users prefer to keep multiple Holgas on hand so they can pick the right Holga for the right moment (and it never hurts to have a back up).

"tape is our friend"

SO.....

WITH THE BACK OFF YOUR HOLGA

Make sure both pieces of foam are still here



If you still have leaks place some tape over these holes

If lens flare is a problem for you.
A small tape flag over this area
might solve the problem....
About 1/16" to 1/8" will should
be enough.....

Very Important

**Make sure the aperture selector switch for cloudy/sunny
Stays where you place it.**

As it has the tendency to want to move from its position.

A Holga Primer

If you purchased one of my "BULB HOLGAS"

Your Shutter will stay open as long as you press the shutter release button if the push rod is pushed in (towards the body) as far as it will go.

You will return to the 1/100 second shutter speed Holga if the Push Rod Is Pulled out (away from the body) as far as it will go.

So, you recently purchased your new Holga to unleash your artistic vision on the world. Before shooting your first roll of film, following are a few suggestions from lessons that I have learned that will maximize your chances for truly great "bad" photos from the beginning.

Remove the plastic insert in the exposure chamber!

The very first thing you must do as a true devotee of the toy camera is to remove the plastic insert in the exposure chamber. The Holga can either render a rectangular format image (6 x 4.5 cm) or a square image (6 x 6 cm), depending on whether you leave the plastic insert intact or remove it from inside the camera. Removing the insert reduces the number of exposures per roll of film to 12 versus 16, but it also introduces vignetting onto your image. This is one of the trademarks of toy camera images, and it serves to direct attention to the center of your film frame. Typically, because of the inferior plastic lens, you will experience a slight blurring of the edges of your frame, with the sharpest area in the center. The vignetting further enhances this effect. Be sure to move the arrow on the film counter to the "12" after you have removed the plastic insert. Besides, if you are used to shooting photos with a rectangular format like 35mm, the change will do you good.

Throw away the lens cap!

Since the Holga is NOT a single lens reflex camera (what do you expect for \$14.95?), you will not be viewing your subject through the lens taking the photograph. This means you will not notice the fact that your lens cap has been perched contentedly on your lens through the duration of your first roll of film. I have "wasted" many unexposed frames of film by inadvertently leaving my lens cap in place. While it is true a lens cap offers protection from dust and scratching, it is also true that the Holga has a plastic, un-coated lens deeply recessed into the lens barrel. Get over it!

Use a fast film

The Holga theoretically offers an F8 aperture for "shady conditions" and F11 for "sunny conditions" with a shutter speed of 1/100th second. Of course this varies infinitely from camera to camera, but should give you an approximate reference point for exposure values. Most Holga shooters therefore use film rated at an ISO of 400.

There are many films available with this ISO rating, with most photographers having their personal favorites. Since I have abandoned developing my own film due to time constraints and a general aversion to darkroom work, I have adopted Kodak's T400CN as my preferred film stock. This film utilizes Kodak's new T-Grain technology for a finer grain (thus the "T"), and is developed in C-41 color negative chemistry (thus the "CN"), which is utilized by all photo processing labs. It is a black and white film, but because it is designed for use with color negative chemistry, you can ask your processor to "tone" your prints for you by using whatever filtration you specify. As an example, I typically ask my lab give to render my prints with a "sepia" tone, although they could just as easily render a blue or red tone, etc.

Also, because print film has a wide exposure latitude and the Holga does not provide for a large range of exposure adjustments, it is not recommended that you shoot with color slide film, which is typically less forgiving and more contrasty than color negative film.

I know many Holga photographers who shoot with Kodak's Tri-X or T-Max films. Ilford HP5 also seems to be a favorite (Ilford makes a black and white film similar to the Kodak T400CN, XP2 400, that is also processed in C-41 color negative chemistry). Generally, black and white film seems to be the overall favorite of toy camera enthusiasts. I believe this is because a lot of shooters process their own film, and with the Holga's limited exposure adjustments, sometimes good prints take a lot of "coaxing" in the darkroom to

justify the images obscurely hidden on the negatives. Also, since the Holga encourages an emphasis on composition, black and white is an excellent medium to highlight this aspect of the toy camera photograph.

Jam a folded piece of cardboard from your film box end flap under the film spool

Now that you have loaded your Holga with the film of your choice, you should tear off a small portion of the end flap of your film box, fold it in half, then jam it underneath the film spool. The Holga is notorious for having a large amount of slack between the take up spool and film spool. The "slack" film causes more distorted images and the resulting roll of exposed film is very loosely wound causing severe light leaks at the edges of the film. By jamming the cardboard under the film spool the film is held more taut, thereby eliminating this problem.

Avoid Light Leaks!

The Holga is relatively light proof compared to its predecessor, the Diana. But you may still experience light leaks if you do not take the following precautions:

Place electrician's tape over the film counter

Most of today's films are sensitive to the red band of the light spectrum, so the red window provides no protection from sunlight. Thus, it is important to place tape over the film counter window. I usually take a 1.75 inch strip of electrician's tape and fold a portion of it onto itself (about 3/4 inch) so that adhesive side meets adhesive side, leaving about 1.4 inch of the adhesive exposed. I then use this exposed adhesive portion to adhere to the Holga's camera body just above the film counter window. The end result is a not sticky "curtain" hanging over the window that you can easily lift to advance your film to the next frame.

Never unload your exposed film in daylight conditions

Even if your film has been wound tightly onto your take up spool, it is important to unload it in either a changing bag or in the protection of relatively subdued light. Typically, if you must unload your film outside, a changing bag will work very effectively in protecting your film. You can utilize your original film box as a container to keep your film relatively safe for transport. In the event that you plan to shoot a lot of film at a given time, multiple Holgas offer a good solution (hey, they're cheap) so that you can avoid the cumbersome process of unloading and loading.

Break all the rules!

The Holga is a toy! It should encourage you to play! Do everything counter to your photographic training. Shoot into the sun to deliberately pick up flare! Hold the camera at any and all angles for a different perspective. Try shooting without looking through the viewfinder (which is notoriously mis-aligned anyway, especially at close distances. The Holga has no concept of parallax correction!) Take advantage of the shutter release operating independently of the film advance knob and shoot multiple exposures (believe me, you will anyway). Take this camera everywhere! It's light and cheap. If it gets stolen, you are not out that much. Don't leave it in your car, as I'm sure it could easily melt.

Share your work

Most toy camera photographers suffer from some delusional ailment that usually requires an audience. Now that you are poised to create true art with your clunky-looking camera, you have an obligation to share your "statement" with the rest of us delusional photographers. Check out the Great Lakes Area Plastic Camera site at <http://www.toycamera.com>. which offers toy camera artists the opportunity to display their work.

Have Fun!!!

Welcome to the fold. I hope you find the same pure joy the Holga has brought to me. Shooting with the Holga means you have accepted the challenge of shooting with a very basic, elemental tool to create images that are unique and sometimes truly wonderful, and along the way you have chosen not to take things too seriously.